

# Plenary discussion session

**DAN LUNNEY:** Sue Briggs raised the question during her talk: “I hope there was a question mark after the title, *a clash of paradigms*”. The answer is no, there is not a question mark after *a clash of paradigms*. We are not posing a question. It is an assertion that there is a clash of paradigms. If you are going to run a debate you need to make an assertion, state a proposition that produces the case for and the case against. It is a thinking tool, a way of drawing out the relevant points. We are not here to discuss the question generally. That is the etiquette around a cup of tea when you are trying to keep the peace. We are not trying to keep the peace. We are debating whether there is a clash of paradigms on this issue.

One of the options we have elected to do in previous forums is to vote on the proposition at the meeting. Some people think there is a clash a paradigms. Some say, “let’s just add a question mark as a topic for discussion”. Chris Dickman asserted there is not a clash of paradigms because there is not a paradigm of community concern. This raises the question of “what is a community?”

**LYN DAWSON:** I was going to ask for your definition of paradigm.

**DAN LUNNEY:** A paradigm is a model, a way of seeing things. A paradigm is a pattern, a set of relationships among the parts of the world we are studying. It is an ideal, a way of seeing how things might work, how they might fit together. It could also be a principle. Scientists often use the word to mean a pattern in nature - from conceiving the problem, identifying the solutions or even evaluating the outcomes.

The issue that we are dealing with here is the view that the community, other than scientists in the community, has a different perception of environmental problems, including the processes for finding a solution and identifying what is in fact the result sought at the end of a project. I think there is a difference in what researchers see at each stage, so it is not just a problem of definition, nor is it just a problem of how to measure aspects of the environment; it is also a difference in what the best result might look like. There are fundamental clashes all along the line. That is why we picked on “paradigm”, meaning the entire pattern, model, ideal or perception of

the world. Has anyone else got any other definition of paradigm they would like to add to that? Would you agree with that, Ron?

**RON STRAHAN:** Yes.

**LYN DAWSON:** I imagine, following from Chris Dickman’s comment, that the fact the community does not have a paradigm might be related to the fact that the community does not use that term. It is a scientific term, more an attitude of taking an overview. Is there a better word that we could use to enhance the discussion from the community point of view?

**DAN LUNNEY:** Yes, there could be and perhaps should have been, Lyn. Shelley Burgin, who spoke first, said that some of the community groups she was talking to did not realise that this program was relevant to them because they looked at the title and thought it was academic, with a word like “paradigm” in it.

**RON STRAHAN:** It may help the discussion to suggest “idea system”.

**SUE BRIGGS:** Or understanding.

**DAN LUNNEY:** Yes, they all fit. Shelley said that the word “paradigm” had put people off, but let us suppose we had used “idea system”.

**LYN DAWSON:** Operating system.

**DAN LUNNEY:** “Idea system” or “Operating system”, would that have pulled in the community groups that Shelley said, “did not realise this is relevant to us”? Another group that did not realise it was relevant were fellow scientists at the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Yesterday, at afternoon tea, someone said, “Look at this program, look who is speaking, I know some of these people.” They looked at the title and did not realise they are also caught up in this clash. They are making decisions, contributing to the confusion and participating in a partisan way, yet do not realise they are part of the debate.

**SUE BRIGGS:** I think this issue is far too narrow because there are three players. There are the agency people who are not generally scientists; there are fellow scientists, whoever we work for; and there is the community. Now, I know that was not the title but I actually think that scientists and the community are very close, and that bureaucrats are a long way away.

That does not mean there are not clashes of paradigms, but it does mean that there is not a clash personally between scientists and the community. Can you clarify? Are you simply speaking about scientists and the community, but not speaking about agency administrators?

**DAN LUNNEY:** Let me be a bit more cynical. When I was listening to Kerry O'Brien on the ABC's 7.30 Report last night there was a discussion of the NHT [Natural Heritage Trust] program. There were pictures of the current leadership of the ACF [Australian Conservation Foundation]. Philip Toyne said there has been a cloud, there have been problems, there have been issues to do with the NHT that have left the conservation movement dissatisfied. The environment has hardly rated a mention in the current election. It has slipped from the number 3 issue to the 7th or 8th issue in people's concern and about their vision of Australia.

Then there was a flash back, which was clever of Kerry O'Brien, to 1996 when Jim Downey was then saying, as head of the ACF, "Look, Labor certainly doesn't have the green vote. This NHT program is going to be wonderful." Kerry O'Brien's comment was, "I think they've all been taken in, that the \$1 billion dollar carrot was, at the time, called "a very successful move" by John Howard to capture the green vote". Another way of looking at it would be to say it has silenced the environment as a political issue. So, it is not community groups or scientists that differ, but it is some politicians who are dying to get this seemingly impossible issue off the agenda.

If the environment is taken off the agenda and ignored, we shall finish up with many additional problems of the sort we have with New South Wales water supply. We are boiling our drinking water for health reasons. We only have to reread the first edition of *A Natural Legacy* where Harry Recher is deploring the failure to manage the catchment of the Hawkesbury. What we need, he argued, is a catchment authority that can deal with the fact that water flows through the catchment and becomes polluted on the way, yet this is a source of drinking water! He said it was an absolute disgrace that there was not an authority to deal with this matter. As I reread the chapter I thought, "Hello, this is 20 years on and we are saying exactly the same thing."

Ecologists are being ignored, so I think trying to politically shake off the issue is a policy error. We should be highlighting it in a different way.

**TERRY DAWSON:** Fundamentally, we are looking at entirely different goals. We are looking at conservation as a general community goal. What has that got to do with science? Science is just an input into the process. It provides information. Research has really nothing specific to do with conservation. Conservation, as it says, is tied up with the community and everybody's perceptions.

I do not see there is such a thing as research-based conservation. There are people providing information. The community then has to decide what conservation is about and how to use that information. If people have all sorts of different agendas, which they have, and want to put the shutters down and not listen to scientists, well, that's fine, but it is not the scientists' fault. The whole process has to be sorted out. We have to know where we are going. The people involved have to decide what they want and then have the guts to see if they can use the information that is available; they can go back to Harry Recher's material, or whatever other information that is available.

There is lots of information available and I am appalled at times at how little people seek new information. I wrote a book on kangaroos so that the educated layman could, supposedly, have access to recent data. I was involved in a seminar at Alice Springs recently where some senior people at CSIRO who work on kangaroos had not read it, they were not up to date.

**DAN LUNNEY:** Does that surprise you?

**TERRY DAWSON:** Yes. So we have to get our direction sorted out and decide what we are really trying to do. We are all concerned about our environment. We want to conserve aspects of it. It is how we go about doing it. I do not think there are different paradigms. There is only one way, but we are stuffing it up in the organisational phase.

**COURTENAY SMITHERS:** Can I read you something I read this morning before I came here. It was written actually by someone in this room: "The future of Australia's fauna will depend in large measure on the quality of the research conducted and skill in communicating the findings." That was written by somebody here, it was written a fair time ago, and if that does not indicate that science is a part of dealing with conservation, then I do not know what does.

**RON STRAHAN:** This is perhaps in the nature of an afterthought, but it does occur to me, following up on Lyn Dawson's question, as to whether the community knows that it is playing with paradigms. Perhaps it is the same sense that the gentleman in Molière discovered that he had been speaking prose all his life.

**DAN LUNNEY:** I thought we would be provocative and vote on whether we thought there was a clash of paradigms, but before we do that, I think there is the issue of the definition of community. It appears to have a different meaning to each person who has spoken. Nancy Pallin also had a point of view about scientists from a community perspective. What is a community to you, Nancy? Since we were a frill, I just wondered what was at the core?

**NANCY PALLIN:** An expensive frill I was going to suggest, although I have never paid for it. What I said this morning was that there has been a lot of help from various scientists, but none of them were paid. Anyway, what is a community? The community includes all of the people who live in the area wherever the issue is evident. It includes everyone from school children, mums and dads, right through to old people, disabled people, and so on.

The Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society is a case study. It used to be called the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee. We publish a little quarterly newsletter. It had to change because we wanted to have tax-deductible donations. I do not know how long it will last, but we have a subscription list of about 300. A lot are north shore people, but it includes odd people from as far afield as other States. It includes the local council, which is responsible for the land on which this flying-fox colony resides. It includes the National Parks and Wildlife Service because we insist that they come and inspect the reserve they are responsible for because it is under a conservation order. If we did not ask them to come, they would not actually know anything about it. We have had to explain it to successive generations of NPWS staff. What else?

**DAN LUNNEY:** Any scientists?

**NANCY PALLIN:** There has been involvement of a number of scientists over the years. Ray and Anne Williams did a terrestrial fauna survey. Mike Augee has been involved with a radiotelemetry study of released flying-foxes and, with Denise Ford, supervised a counting project for 3 years. Peggy Eby has given advice on flying-

foxes over the years. She has kept us informed of papers and the work that she was doing; she has come and talked to our group. In fact, at our open events twice a year we have had just about every bat scientist in eastern Australia come and talk, including Dan Lunney, Brad Law, Mike Archer and Sue Hand. They have all given their time for nothing. They are just all amazing and great people. We have had over a hundred people each time come and listen to the talks.

**DAN LUNNEY:** So how does that square with your remark this morning? We can enlarge the debate, can't we?

**NANCY PALLIN:** What I was really trying to say was that in terms of the actual design of a habitat restoration project, there has been virtually no input. Now, that has probably been our fault. Perhaps we should have asked for more help, but I was not sure who to ask. Most of you are mammalogists. Who knows about bush regeneration and restoring bat colonies? Does anybody? We would like to hear from you.

We looked at regeneration at other flying-fox colonies, like that at Wingham Brush, which has a track record going back to the early 1980s. We looked at what they have done. They did have assistance from the botanic gardens in assessing their methods. We just did the same thing. Do you want to know any more?

**DAN LUNNEY:** Do you think there is a clash of paradigms here between the community and research?

**NANCY PALLIN:** I do not think there needs to be. I think we have to work together.

**DAN LUNNEY:** That's a different question though, isn't it?

**NANCY PALLIN:** In terms of the actual on-ground habitat restoration projects, the scientific side has been left out. We have not had any actual scientists monitoring it. So is that a clash? I do not know how to answer that question. Give me an easier one.

**SUE BRIGGS:** Dan, I think this a bit dangerous. It just reinforces the strange belief that scientists are over there and the community is over here.

**DAN LUNNEY:** I think that Nancy is a scientist. It is hard to move backwards and forwards. What are you when you are a member of the Australasian Bat Society?

**NANCY PALLIN:** I think I am a community-group member. Science is something I have never

really practised. Science, in terms of putting up an hypothesis and testing it, is something I have not really done except in terms of this habitat restoration project, and we have not finished it yet. In about 50 years' time I'll tell you the answer.

**DAVID NEILL:** I am a post-graduate student from Southern Cross University so I guess I am in that grey area between community and scientist. I think that there is too much of this “us and them”. I mean, scientists are members of the community.

**DAN LUNNEY:** I think that was emerging from Nancy's answer. There is a lot of scientists who have participated in the Ku-ring-gai bat camp activities, including getting that patch of land set aside for the flying-foxes, so I do not see the clash in terms of “we, they”. I am trying to dispel that “we, they” division.

**LYN DAWSON:** I think, Dan, that it is difficult to answer your question because of what we have demonstrated today, that there is a full spectrum of views. There are scientists who clash with communities. There are communities that get along moderately well with scientists, and there are some that meld together particularly well. It depends on the people and the issues.

**DAN LUNNEY:** Where part of the clash lies is not with some of the community groups that turn up at these forums or those who share Nancy Pallin's perspective. It is the way that community groups are structured around the NHT funding and its definition of community for a project to get funded. There are people who claim to be community groups, but who represent the development interests in a particular area and do not like a scientific approach; they give such projects a zero ranking.

**SUE BRIGGS:** What you are talking about is agency, Dan. You are not talking about science and community, you are talking about agencies and bureaucrats, funding bodies, and all that sort of thing. You are not talking about scientists.

**DAN LUNNEY:** We are talking about the definition of community used in the NHT funding program.

**SUE BRIGGS:** Which is a bureaucratic organisation.

**DAN LUNNEY:** No, it is a policy decision at the federal government level where there is a clash between what the national biodiversity strategy is saying and the way the funding arm is set up to finance the ideas that lie behind the biodiversity

strategy and the State of the Environment report. There is a clash between the way that community groups are identified, and a research-based approach to tackling some of these environmental issues.

**SUE BRIGGS:** I think you're defining the title in a narrow way.

**DAN LUNNEY:** No, I am just looking at those areas where there is a clash.

**DENIS SAUNDERS:** I do not think it is a clash. I think it is just total confusion. The reason for it set me wondering several years ago. I have been asked to talk to a lot of landcare groups and community groups. They ring up and say, “Look, we heard you work on birds. We hear you know a lot about corridors. What we would like you to do is come into our area on a field day and tell us what we need to put in the landscape.” I went to Braidwood on Monday night. There were 60 to 80 people present from Tallaganda Shire. The point I raised with them is, “I can't come in as an expert and tell you what to do. What I can come and do is to say, ‘These are the ecological imperatives under which you must operate. These are the things that are going to change.’” I always get back to using what I call the ultimate remnant, and that is the lovely 300 to 400 year old eucalypt standing in a paddock that has been there since before Cook set off for Tahiti, but it has nothing underneath it. The question I pose to them is: “What do you see as the future of this landscape in 50, 100 or 150 years' time?” I use 150 because that is how long it takes for a tree to be large enough to have a hollow for a black cockatoo to nest in.

You can draw down water in a decade. You can do various other things to assist ecosystem function. If you are going to put ecosystem function back into the landscape, you need to do this, this and this. But the point is I do not live in your landscape. I have a vested interest in it, but you are the community that has to design it and have a vision for that landscape. I feel the problem is the confusion arising because we have not defined the vision of the future and by not doing that, we then do not know what questions to ask.

Scientists just provide a set of information to guide the decisions that local communities must make because, when all is said and done, they are the people who are going to manage the land. Even your little reserve should be managed by the local community because they own it. The

conservation service is only a trustee acting on behalf of the people to manage that reserve and it is the lack of vision that we are really missing. Quite frankly, the political process is scared stiff of using the term “vision”, but it should not be because we have to have a vision for the future.

**DAN LUNNEY:** In one sense you are in a privileged position, Denis, when you are invited to a group. You can ask the communities to elaborate on their vision of another 150 years. By the time you have been invited, there is almost no clash of paradigms because they are prepared to tell you about their vision and share yours. It is the landcare and community groups that do not invite you. That is where the problems may be lying. By the time you have been invited there is already a preparedness to work together, so I think that is not the clash we are talking about - in fact, it is the beginning of the solution and it just needs articulation on both sides. There’s already goodwill on both sides. Great, we are underway. I think the clash occurs when neither side even looks in the other’s direction.

**SUE BRIGGS:** I want to make something really clear. I have seen the figures. Yes, there are some community groups that toss out projects from agencies and scientists when they are assessing them for the NHT. I know I am being very narrow, but you alluded to this and I think it is what is worrying you. The projects that go up from the State Assessment Panel come out of the Regional Assessment Panels, which in turn come straight out of the catchment management committees, and these include a significant number of scientific projects from agencies.

Those projects were not - and I can’t say this strongly enough - were not thrown out by the regional assessment panels. They were not thrown out by the community groups. One or two probably were. There are one or two people that do not like national parks, of course, and you choose with care the catchment management area you work in. But they were thrown out at a different level, and we all know where it is and I don’t want to carry on about it. It was not the community and please stop saying it was because it was not.

**DAN LUNNEY:** If you are saying they are thrown out in Canberra, or on the political path to Canberra, let’s say so. That means there are public servants or committee employees who are being instructed in a particular way by elected representatives who are defining the community in what may be a biased way. If anywhere in the

political process - be it in Canberra, or any other stage along the way that the vetting occurs, then it is one person or group or party defining community. It may occur on catchment committees or in shires where the president says, “I know what the biodiversity issues are for the shire. We’re going to have biodiversity over here and development over there”. This position is adopted before a start is made on the planning maps. They have decided where biodiversity issues are going to be allowed to be examined and plans made for conservation. The definition of the problem, such as loss of biodiversity, and the community are in the same hands.

**JAMIE MOLLOY:** This is quite a pertinent forum because I am employed on an NHT grant to develop a manual for community environmental assessment and monitoring. On this question of whether there is a clash of paradigms, I like to think of us all being in the same boat. In that sense I would like to lump us all together rather than split us into different boxes.

If we take what Peter said about Einstein’s idea that science is basically just commonsense at a fine scale, then I think that community and research-based conservation and the contribution of different sectors of the human species are really just points along one scale. If there are people out there in community groups who make observations on the environment, they have a particular objective for making those observations. They might have noticed that weeds in the patch of bush at the end of the road are increasing and there are not as many birds around as there used to be, and they go and make more observations. They might go and get assistance.

At the other end of the scale we have the stereotypical boffin in the laboratory analysing genes or whatever, making observations and measurements as well. I think if this is the case then there is really no clash of paradigms. We all do research that is related to whatever our interests are. All of that research I think contributes to the general collective pool of knowledge in our society about our environment. The clash that I think does exist between science and the community, however, is in language and also in access to appropriate information. That issue seems to come up time and time again from the community groups that I work with.

As Nancy Pallin has pointed out, where do you get the information about how to rehabilitate a bat colony? It is something that has not really

been done before. We probably have fantastic data on bats in a range of areas, but we really do not know about how to manage and conserve them. In terms of conservation and environmental management, I think this confused situation is reflected in the plethora of environmental legislation, and the duplication of responsibilities in government agencies for environmental management. I think that the only answer is to address the political and institutional arrangements and make changes to clarify the situation.

I shall mention the New Zealand situation with the development of their Resource Management Act based loosely on regional councils and so forth. That has been touted in Australia for a number of years as a possible model, yet there seems to be a lack of political will to go down that track. So I ask: "What's happening in our community in terms of environmental management, and the politics of environmental management?"

**CHRIS BRYDON:** It seems to me that the problem is that Terry Dawson and Denis Saunders are both right - it is a management problem, it is also a vision problem. States are just colonial relics. If you think about it, if the entire catchment of the Murray-Darling Basin was a single State with Adelaide as its capital, you can be damn sure that the water quality would be better.

**PAUL WATERS:** Paul Waters from the ABC. I would like to make an observation about a parallel situation which might give a new perspective on what has been discussed today. The parallel exists within medicine where there is the medical establishment and medical research on one hand and the alternative medicines on the other. The alternative medicines have become extremely popular because individuals in society feel empowered that they have taken control of their own health. Rightly or wrongly, whether their echinacea, their pills or nostrums work or not is irrelevant to the fact that there is popular support behind it. So as long as there is that popular support, you are not going to get anyone coming in to regulate it because that will not be rewarded at the ballot box.

So you have the medical research community tub-thumping saying, "We want in. We know that something is going wrong here. We know that we can suggest a much better way of people looking after their health. Someone change the

regulations to make us involved in the equation. Someone give us the power to do this", and as long as that is the situation they can continue to be ignored. The people who are making a difference in that equation are the doctors who are taking on alternative medical practices and offering them to their customers and through that they are able to filter out people who are genuinely ill with cancer and they are not giving them echinacea or some other pills. They are sending them through for proper medical treatment, and for the 95 per cent of other cases they are saying "Look, let me do some iridology on you and you'll feel better". That is what they are giving them and it works.

The reason why it is a parallel example is because the power for conservation has now been given over to the community, and they are not going to let go. The Liberal government is running around touting it as a success and so we can sit back as a research community and say, "Look, we know that there are things wrong and we can show you how to fix them. Please, regulate to put us on your committees", or "Please, invite us on to your committees to come and do these things." As long as you do that, you will stay on the outer. The difference will be when the research community goes on to those committees of their own volition and starts working from the inside with the communities.

**KATHY DAVIS:** It has not been mentioned today, but there are a number of scientists that are in community groups. I think there will be a time in the future for them to stand up and be counted, but at the moment a lot of them are being frightened that their peers will look down on them. There is actually a significant number working from within. They have a lot of power too because they can guide other people.

**MARTIN DENNY:** I want to take up something that Denis Saunders said. About two years ago I was involved with a symposium run by the National Trust. It was called 'Things We Want To Keep'. It was mainly for local government, for councils. It was a series of talks - I talked about wildlife corridors. What came out of it was the need to provide a rule of thumb guide on the idea of what sort of corridors, what sizes, shapes, and restrictions are needed for wildlife corridors.

I drew on American research and experience. There is quite an extensive body of research and one can say if it is going to be 1 kilometre long, it has to be 500 metres wide. You have to have two

tree lengths as a buffer zone. These things have been researched and there is an extensive literature on them. What seems to be the problem is exactly what Nancy Pallin was saying. We have a lot of community groups, a lot of people who want to do things, but we do not have access to that research base because a lot of us are not scientists. Scientists are either too lazy or we really do not want to get our hands dirty. We should be able to manipulate that research base to come up with some rules of thumb to help a lot of these people.

Again, it is the communication between the research base and the community that seems to be drastically missing at the moment. We are all trying to build our own little power structures instead of trying to pass on the wealth of information that we have on the environment and how to repair and manage it. I think the information base is not being tapped into mainly because of the laziness of scientists.

**PHIL COLEMAN:** Perhaps I could pick up on that. Let us go back to the Royal Zoological Society in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. We published a journal which was accessible to everybody. It carried articles from every discipline you could think of. Some of them were pretty boring, some of them were very interesting, but they were broadly across the whole base of research. Today we do not have that. We have a malacological society journal, entomological society journal and so many other specific journals that are taking the old-fashioned scientist and the community people away from our origins as an RZS group and putting them into little parcels, little pockets, isolated from everybody else.

We do have a few common natural history magazines but they do not attract the same sort of people in many ways. I think there is room for going back. I do not know how we are going to do it. I know the editorial problems and the selling problems, but we are lacking that community vehicle that we used to have.

**PETER MITCHELL:** We are using the wrong words. "Paradigm" is a word that I only just discovered a few years ago and I barely understand it even now and yet I would class myself as a scientist. Community; we are all community. We are all many communities. It is a plural word, there should not be a singular. Most people in this room belong to several different communities and even community organisations. The word we should be chasing here is "communication" and I

heard it from Martin Denny for the first time this afternoon. That is the word that is the focus.

Scientists have been getting cleverer and cleverer over the years, hunkering down behind heaps of jargon and protecting themselves and only communicating with one another. They are very poor at communicating across these barriers, as we learnt last year in the forum dealing with the journalists and media. It was exactly the same situation that we are dealing with today. Somehow or another we have to get into this communication mode.

One of the reasons for this problem I suspect is that science teaching does not deal with it. As an academic scientist I am guilty over the years of not teaching my students that they have to get out there, take responsibility and share their information through the community. When they do that, the rewards are immense and many, many people do it. Many, many scientists do it. I bet most people in this room are involved in it in some way.

**DAN LUNNEY:** But you would not shape a seminar around an issue called "communication in research-based conservation". There's not a clash there, is there? No-one would come.

**PENNY BRYDON:** I think that perhaps it should have had a different title. What Courtenay Smithers said is right. What we should be looking at is science and the community as cooperators.

**SUE BRIGGS:** I cannot stand this artificial polarisation. I think it is counterproductive and extremely dangerous for scientists and probably for the community, and it is not real.

**DAN LUNNEY:** I think if you set up a debate, then it is a familiar paradigm for tackling an issue. Our parliamentary system is set up as a government and opposition. We debate as two separate teams, trying to come to some common answers. It is a way for society to deal with problems, especially complex problems needing complex answers. We are not saying we should maintain the polarity, but it is a way of stretching an idea, Sue, instead of just nodding one's head in agreement and saying, "We're all going to communicate."

**MARTIN DENNY:** Victor Hugo said that a philosopher never has an answer, a fool always does. I think that really is the problem - it is that we as scientists find it difficult to come up with some rules that can be defended scientifically to exactly the 95 percent confidence level. What scientists have to be able to do is to reach out a

little bit more and say, “Look, there is an element of risk in what I’m telling you. It is a bit of advice that may evolve as time goes on, but give it a try; it is the best we can do at this time.” They should give that information out instead of holding back and waiting for their 8-year study to come through, or at least try 1 or 2 years into that study to develop something, take a bit of a risk and provide that information which might be rough on the edges but which can be very useful.

**NANCY PALLIN:** I suggest that next year you have a seminar on rules of thumb for recovering Australian landscapes. I shall send you some suggestions.

**DAN LUNNEY:** What proportion of the current audience would come to that one? What is interesting from that show of hands is that I notice there is a sharp shift when you change the topic from ethics, to saving the world, to communicating.

The question I am asking is: Do you think there is a clash of paradigms between community and research-based conservation? A show of hands. There are about equal numbers saying yes and no. Who abstained from voting? I think we had about a three-way split in the audience on yes, no and abstain.

**DAVID PRIDDEL:** A lot of people here are in agreement with some of the issues that have been raised. The one thing that sticks out is the question: Did the NHT get it right?

**DAN LUNNEY:** That question is now being put. Show of hands for yes, for no. That is a fairly overwhelming no. Good - any other questions? Don’t let’s just stall at my one. I wrote the title. Is there another question?

**SUSAN WRIGHT:** I have to admit that I am from NHT, and want to ask how do we fix it?

**DAN LUNNEY:** How do we fix it? We have three answers around the room.

**CATHY HEMERY:** A couple of suggestions. One is to include a research component as being a viable alternative where there has to be a tick in the research box. Secondly, NHT needs to take into account that a lot of the restoration projects take longer than 1 or 2 years to implement, so they should look carefully at funding ongoing projects and not fund one-night stands and then throw them out and fund somebody else.

**SUE BRIGGS:** I think that is right. I mean CSIRO, universities and agency research people and planners must be able to apply for funding on the same basis as anyone else, but they must also

get a community sign-off. It is simple. I can understand Senator Hill not wanting scientists to be off on some fantasy planet that he imagines that we are all on all the time - which we are not. You can make sure you have a partnership with a community group, but research organisations must be able to be a proponent, which at the moment they cannot be.

Martin Denny said, “Why don’t we get off our bums and go and do something?” I can tell you why, Martin. I spend most of my time mucking around with administration, not science, the administration tied up with the NHT and I am just one bit player.

**DAN LUNNEY:** There are other answers. You could say if the NHT is meant to be funding a better environment for the 21st century, it is then claiming to support the issues identified through community consultation in the national strategy for conserving biodiversity, and the international convention we signed. We are also trying to address the issues identified in the State of the Environment [SoE] report. So, if the NHT fund, as a billion-dollar fund, is trying to deal with those biodiversity and State of the Environment issues, then to only finance a subset of them is an error.

You can identify a number of major headings inside each of those biodiversity and SoE documents. Then you could say that we shall seek a balance across them instead of just choosing a few items. You can make sure the policy documents on biodiversity and SoE match the operational arm, which is the NHT funding.

**SUSAN WRIGHT:** They are all good suggestions. How do we get them implemented? That’s the next step. I mean, people keep coming up with “This needs to change, that needs to change” and that’s fine, but what is needed is to get them to happen.

**DAN LUNNEY:** One of the obvious means is to modify the NHT form to make sure that the components of science get a thorough tick in the boxes. Make sure there is a ranking for achievability on the technical side, the research side, as well as on the community side. Unless you can score properly in both categories the grant should not be given. The other point is the length of time it takes to follow through. A 1-year planting program followed by no watering for the next year is going to be a failure.

There has to be a better mechanism than just a simple assertion by the proponent that they are



going to do something. There needs to be an on-ground audit of the grants that were given out last year to see what was achieved, and to compare what was stated in the application and what was done. Future grants should not be given to those who fail the audit. So there are some straightforward mechanisms relevant to funding.

We are talking about a program that has stopped other programs going ahead. There are little groups, like national estate grants, that have been lost because they have been subsumed into one vision of the world, which is one that I suggest is a lesser version than what has been agreed by the community via the national strategy for conserving biodiversity or acknowledgment of the deteriorating state of the environment as recognised through the SoE report.

**TERRY DAWSON:** Thank you, Dan. I would suggest that the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales should take a major initiative for lobbying in respect to this particular issue. I would

so move that motion. I really think it is within the purview of the Society. We have been a bit weak in this area in recent times. I know Chris Dickman has done an excellent job in some of the areas at the State level, but we have not really had a push in recent times at the federal level.

**RON STRAHAN:** This is not a meeting of the Royal Zoological Society, but it would be in order for this meeting to make a recommendation to the Society along the lines that Terry has just mentioned. If that were to happen, I'd be very proud to second the motion.

**DAN LUNNEY:** I think acclamation accepts that motion. We have to be out of here by 4.00 and it is already about 10 past, so I think we had better hit the road. So I shall call this meeting to a close. I'd like to thank everyone for their participation. See you next year.